

And so I value this relationship, and I thank her for her friendship. And I'm looking forward to going to Germany again.

Thank you all.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, to put this in a nutshell, I invited the President to come over before the G-8 summit and to visit me in my constituency, simply because I wanted to show him around and show him a little bit of what has been achieved in what we call the new Linder; to get to know, also, people who, like me, lived on the other side of that wall. And let me say that I'm very much looking forward to his coming over.

Q. When?

Chancellor Merkel. Since the G-8 summit—that was the question as to when you would come over—the G-8 summit is from the 15th through the 17th, so it will, in all probability, be the day before that—the 14th.

President Bush. Yes, somewhere around there. I want to keep it somewhat of a mystery. *[Laughter]* Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:16 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Zacarias Moussaoui, an Al Qaida operative who was sentenced on May 4 for helping to plan the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks; and former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany. Chancellor Merkel spoke in German, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on the National Day of Prayer

May 4, 2006

Welcome to the White House. I am really glad you're here. Thanks for coming. And I'm honored to join you for the National Day of Prayer. On this special day, we give thanks for the many ways that America has been blessed, and we acknowledge the Almighty, who is the source of these blessings.

I appreciate the chairman of the National Day of Prayer, Shirley Dobson. I notice you brought your old husband with you too. *[Laughter]* Thank you for organizing this event here at the White House and around the Nation.

Mrs. Bright, it's good to see you. Thank you; welcome. I'm glad you're back again. Dr. Blackaby, thank you very much, sir, for

being the honorary chairman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force. And we welcome Marilyn as well.

I want to thank the members of the Cabinet who are here. Thank you all for coming. Appreciate you taking time out of your day to be here to join.

I'm glad to see my friend Archbishop Demetrios. How are you, sir? Thanks for coming. I appreciate the military chaplains who are here. Thanks for administering to the needs and souls of the men and women who wear the uniform. Yours is an important job, and I'm grateful, as your Commander in Chief, for what you do.

I want to thank Rabbi Ciment, Father Connor, and Jay Dennis for joining us. Thank you for your prayers and your strong statements.

I thank Rebecca St. James for your beautiful music. We're proud you're here. I want to thank those who accompanied you. About the coat—*[laughter]*—your answer is, it's the voice that matters—*[laughter]*—and the spirit behind the voice.

And, Gail, thank you for coming as well. We're proud you're here. Thanks for sharing with us.

America is a nation of prayer. It's impossible to tell the story of our Nation without telling the story of people who pray. The first pilgrims came to this land with a yearning for freedom. They stepped boldly onto the shores of a New World, and many of them fell to their knees to give thanks.

At decisive moments in our history and in quiet times around family tables, we are a people humbled and strengthened and blessed by prayer. During the darkest days of the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress and George Washington—I call him the first George W.—*[laughter]*—urged citizens to pray and to give thanks and to ask for God's protection.

More than two centuries since our first National Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving, we continue to ask for God's guidance in our own lives and in the life our Nation. Each year, thousands of citizens write letters and send cards to the White House that mention their prayers for this Nation and this Office.

In my travels across the great land, a comment that I hear often from our fellow citizens is, "Mr. President, I pray for you and your family." It's amazing how many times a total stranger walks up and says that to me. You'd think they'd say, "How about the bridge?" or "How about filling the pot-holes?" [Laughter] No, they say, "I've come to tell you I pray for you, Mr. President."

And the only thing I know to do is to look at them in the eye and say, "That is the greatest gift that a fellow citizen can do for those of us who have been entrusted to lead our country." And for that—[applause]. And so I thank thanks—I say thanks to the millions of Americans who pray each day for our Nation, our troops, and our elected leaders.

Prayer is a gift from Almighty God that transforms us, whether we bow our heads in solitude or offer swift and silent prayers in times of trial. Prayer humbles us by reminding us of our place in creation. Prayer strengthens us by reminding us that God loves and cares for each and every soul in His creation. And prayer blesses us by reminding us that there is a divine plan that stands above all human plans.

In the stillness and peace of prayer, we surrender our will to God's will, and we learn to serve His eternal purposes. By opening ourselves to God's priorities, our hearts are stirred, and we are inspired to action—to feed the hungry, to reach out to the poor, to bring aid to a widow or to an orphan or to the less fortunate.

On this day, we also remember that we are a people united by our love for freedom, even when we differ in our personal beliefs. In America, we are free to profess any faith we choose—or no faith at all. What brings us together is our shared desire to answer the call to serve something greater than ourselves.

Over the past 5 years, I have watched the American people answer this call. Some serve their fellow man on distant shores, placing themselves in harm's way so that others might live in freedom. Others serve in our Nation's armies of compassion, bringing comfort and kindness to suffering communities at home and abroad. In millions of acts of service, the American people have shown the good heart of our Nation.

From our Nation's prayerful beginnings, America has grown and prospered. Through prayer, we humbly recognize our continued dependence on divine providence.

I want to thank you all for keeping prayer a part of our national life. May God bless each one of you, and may God continue to bless our Nation.

And now it is my honor to welcome Reverend Jay Dennis.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:44 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to James Dobson, husband of National Day of Prayer chairman Shirley Dobson; Vonette Bright, former chairman, National Day of Prayer Task Force; Marilyn Blackaby, wife of Henry T. Blackaby, honorary chairman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force; Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America; Rabbi Sholom Ciment, director, Chabad Lubavitch of Greater Boynton, Boynton Beach, FL; Father Charles P. Connor, pastor, St. Rose of Lima Church, Carbondale, PA; Rev. Jay Dennis, pastor, First Baptist Church at the Mall, Lakeland, FL; gospel music entertainer Rebecca St. James; and entertainer Gail Richardson.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Tabare Vazquez of Uruguay

May 4, 2006

President Bush. *Bienvenidos.* It's been a distinct pleasure to welcome the President to the Oval Office. We've had a very extensive conversation about—we talked about a lot of subjects. We talked about the human condition. We talked about our mutual desire to improve lives through good education and health care. I assured the President that the billions of dollars of aid that we spend in the neighborhood are all aimed at justice and giving people a chance to realize their dreams.

We talked about ways to make sure there's better student exchanges between our countries. It made a lot of sense; after all, the President was educated—or received some education in my home state of Texas, at M.D. Anderson.

We talked about extending our commercial relations. One of the interesting topics that the President brought up was renewable energy, a subject that is very dear to my heart